

NATIONAL
HEALTH CARE
for the
HOMELESS
COUNCIL

Trauma-Informed Storytelling

Presented by the National Consumer Advisory Board

Disclaimer

This project was supported by the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number U30CS09746, a National Training and Technical Assistance Cooperative Agreement for \$1,625,741, with 0% match from nongovernmental sources. This information or content and conclusions are those of the presenters and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government. NHCHC is a nonpartisan, noncommercial organization.

Presenters

Art Rios Sr.

David
Peery

Keith
Belton

Amy
Grassette

Carmon
Ryals

Valarie
Dowell

Joanne
Guarino

Sukari
Finley

Katherine
Cavanaugh

Agenda

8:30 – 8:45

- Introduction

8:45 – 9:15

- Trauma Overview

9:15 – 9:45

- Storytelling Overview

9:45 – 10

- BREAK

10 – 11

- Trauma-Informed Storytelling Panel

11 – 11:15

- BREAK

11:15 – 12:15

- Storytelling Practice

12:15 – 12:30

- Q&A

Goals

Storytelling often involves processing and sharing trauma, which has the potential to re-traumatize the audience or the storyteller.

This consumer-led workshop will explain the basics of trauma and storytelling, share lessons of how to practice trauma-informed storytelling, and give attendees the chance to develop and practice telling their stories.

Group Agreements

- How do we demonstrate respect for each other and this space?
- How do we care for each other and this space?

Self Care

This workshop may talk about intense topics and could cause stress reactions in some.

Care for yourself today:

- Take breaks
- Breathe deeply
- Share only what you want to share.
- Ask for support
 - Art Rios Sr. is available for support at any time

NATIONAL
HEALTH CARE
for the
HOMELESS
COUNCIL

Trauma and Trauma- Informed Principles

Trauma involves..

Events

- Singular, multiple events, or chronic conditions
- Happen to one person or a group of people
- Natural or human-caused

Experience

- How a person interprets or assigns meaning to event
- Done subconsciously

Effects

- Physically or emotionally harmful
- Lasting negative effects on functioning and well-being (mental, physical, social, emotional, spiritual)

*Adapted from SAMHSA TIP 57

Secondary or Vicarious Trauma

- . Secondary trauma is emotional stress that happens when someone hears about the first hand trauma experiences of another.
- . Secondary trauma can lead to chronic fatigue, disturbing thoughts, poor concentration, emotional detachment, exhaustion, avoidance, absenteeism, and physical illness.

Effects of Trauma

Thoughts

- Purpose
- View of Others
- View of World
- Sense of Safety
- Sense of Fairness
- Vision for the future

Behaviors

- Aggression
- Impulsivity
- Hypervigilance
- Self-destructive
- Substance Use

Feelings

- Agitation
- Anger
- Sadness
- Depression
- Guilt
- Hopelessness
- Shame

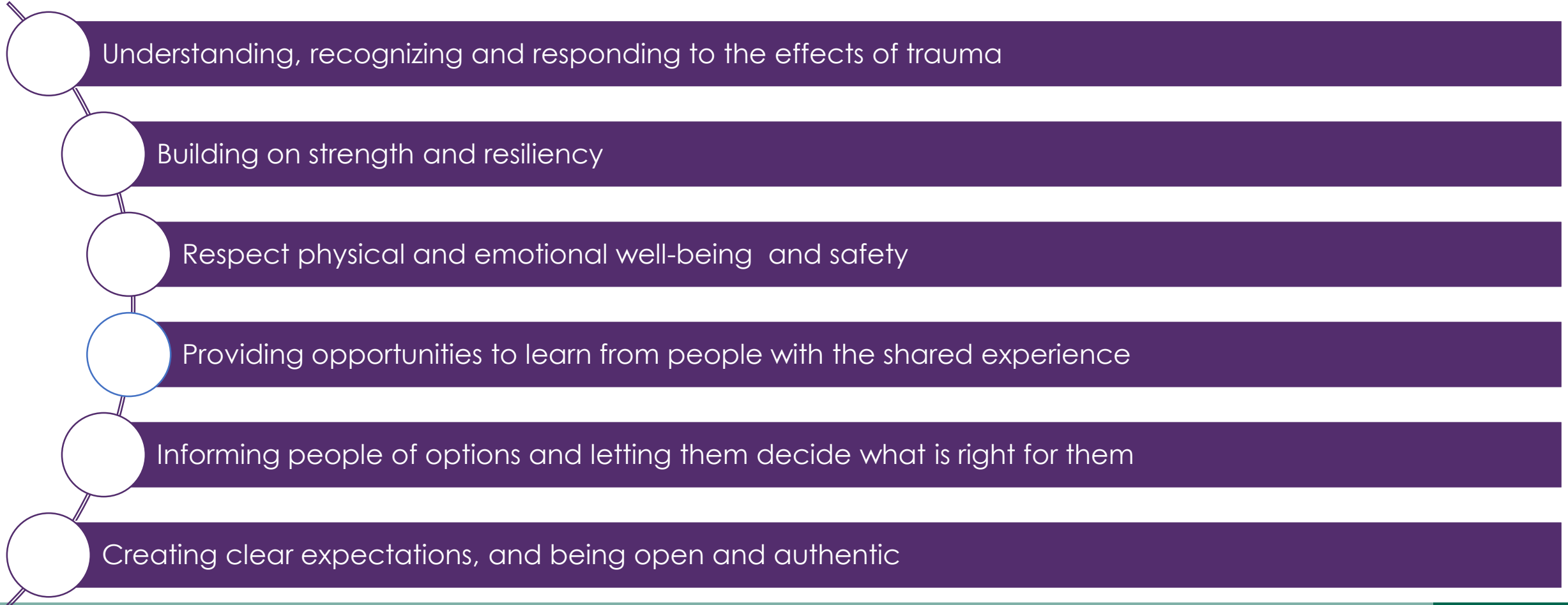
Relationships

- Distrust
- Withdrawal
- Dependence
- Avoidance

Body

- Sleep Disturbance
- Hypertension
- Physical Ailments
- Nightmares
- Flashbacks

Trauma-Informed Principles



Trauma-Informed Difference

Traditional Perspectives

- Challenging behaviors are personal deficits
- Difficult behaviors are disruptive and maladaptive
- Punitive approaches
- What is wrong with you?

Trauma-Informed Perspectives

- Challenging behaviors are ways of coping
- Difficult behaviors may be an automatic stress response
- Strengths-based
- What happened to you?

Prioritize Self Care

We must care for ourselves by first acknowledging our condition, create a realistic plan of care and acting upon it.

Self-care should not be an “emergency response plan” to be used only when stress becomes overwhelming.



NATIONAL
HEALTH CARE
for the
HOMELESS
COUNCIL

Storytelling

The Value of Storytelling

Storytelling is a way to use personal experiences to talk about issues in a broader way. This human understanding and connection can help:

- Challenge assumptions, generalizations, and stereotypes
- Humanize issues
- Create bridges with people
- Build community based on shared humanity
- Develop empathy and understanding
- Expand perspectives

Benefits of Storytelling

- Help individuals to better understand their own experience, help them find the strength to share their voice, and gain confidence in the power of that voice.
- Allow individuals to be an instrument for change.
- Demonstrating how the health center and support services help, and how it could help others.
- Influence more effective policy solutions and resource allocation

Key Components of Stories

Message

- Consider the key lessons you want people to take away.

Values/Beliefs

- Personal and social values and beliefs impact our experience, perception, and healing. Share the values that are important to understand.

Emotions

- Engage the audience in the story. Consider what feelings you are trying to elicit from story and audience

Images

- People relate to what they can imagine. Draw a picture for them.

Language

- Language can help draw pictures and create understanding. Choose your words thoughtfully.

Sharing your Message and Values

- Engaging your audience by telling your story for a specific purpose and conveying that message to your audience clearly.
- Your message and purpose should guide which parts of your story to tell.
- Audiences will create their own meaning based on what they hear and how they interpret things.
- Control the message so they take away the information and perspective you want the audience to obtain or receive from your story.

Developing your Story

- 
- Who is my audience?
 - What is my goal for sharing a story?
 - What do I want the audience to feel, think, or do?
 - What parts of my story can create that feeling and message?
 - How does this story relate to other people's experiences? To social issues?
 - How can this story create change? How did this story change me?

Storytelling Tips

Evoke Emotion and Dramatic Tension

- Focus on emotions rather than data and dates.
- Include emotions to inspire and motivate the audience to action.

Draw a Picture for the Audience

- Use vivid sensory language to immerse the audience in the world you are creating.
- Demonstrate a core message through your story. Show them--don't tell them.

Be Simple and Relatable

- Don't get stuck in the weeds. Edit out the irrelevant details.
- Focus only on what they need to know so they don't get lost in dates, years, or get off topic.
- Be clear and concise.

Be Credible

- Always be truthful. People can tell if you're exaggerating or not being honest, and you will lose credibility.
- If part of your story is not credible, they may disregard the entire message.

Telling the WHOLE Story

- Often messages focus on homelessness as an individual failing
- When the problem is defined as an individual issue, you do not see the connection to other people in similar situations, society, or policy.
- You want the audience to see that larger picture.
- When telling personal stories, it is important to connect how experiences were influenced by social and systemic forces

NATIONAL
HEALTH CARE
for the
HOMELESS
COUNCIL

Trauma-Informed Storytelling

What is Trauma-Informed Storytelling?

The process of learning to tell your story in a way that is safe and healthy for you and your audience.

Developing Your Story

- Contextualize your experiences so you see the social forces or causes that contributed to your homelessness.
- Don't blame yourself for your experience. Blaming yourself for your experiences has negative effects on physical, mental health and relationships.
- You need to be safe within yourself.
- Follow your instincts. Follow your own process.
- Know your triggers.
- Find humor if you can.
- Talk about it with friends or a provider before speaking publicly so you can work through the pain first.
- Share a little bit at a time in different spaces to get comfortable.

Sharing Your Story

- Be aware of the possibility of re-traumatization
 - Know your triggers. Know things to help you relax and bring them.
 - Be prepared for the unexpected. Potential triggers you didn't know you had, things that may have been repressed.
 - Use your supports.
- Have a "safe" story
 - Some parts of our story we may not have healed from or may not be comfortable talking about with certain audiences. Figure out if you can tell it differently to talk about it, or if you have to leave it out.
- Consider the audience when choosing how to tell your story.
 - We don't know who is in the audience and what may trigger them. We don't need to expose all the details to make our point.
 - Choose your language carefully to control the message and emotions.
- If you are feeling emotional, check in with yourself. Is it safe for you to experience this emotion?

Lessons

- Modify how you tell your story
- Put your story in a content you are comfortable with
- Focus on where you are now and how your story got you there to get through emotional moments. Find your strength in your story.
- You will feel stronger every time you tell my story. Strength in yourself and in knowing you are having an impact.

Sharing expertise in the room...

- Has anyone ever told their stories before? How did it make you feel?
- For those who haven't told their stories, is there a reason you haven't?
- What benefits do you get from telling your story?
- What scares you about telling your story?
- What support do you need to be comfortable telling your story?
- What are things that you do to make sure you aren't re-traumatized when you are preparing to tell your stories?
- Have you ever had a difficult time telling your story? How did you get through it?

NATIONAL
HEALTH CARE
for the
HOMELESS
COUNCIL

Storytelling Practice

Storytelling Example: Keith Belton

- What was effective?
- What did you relate to?
- What emotions or images did you see or feel?
- What could have been improved?

NATIONAL
HEALTH CARE
for the
HOMELESS
COUNCIL

Storytelling Practice

Q&A

Katherine Cavanaugh

kcavanaugh@nhchc.org

(443) 703 – 1320